DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 128 910 EA 008 681

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TITLE Immediate Superordinates' Perception of the Middle School Principal's Functions.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Personnel; *Administrator Attitudes; Administrator Background; Administrator Characteristics; *Administrator Role; Junior High Schools; *Middle Schools; *National Surveys; Predictor Variables; *Principals; Supervisors

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceptions of middle school principals' immediate superordinates regarding the principal's proper functions and sought to determine if those perceptions were significantly affected by differences in geographic location, sex, age, or administrative background among superordinates. Data were gathered through a Likert-type questionnaire that was mailed to 250 superordinates throughout the United States. Superordinates were asked to rate the importance of 124 administrative functions within the six major categories of curriculum and instruction leadership, personnel guidance, school-community relations, administrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement. Analysis of the responses showed that superordinates' expectations for middle school principals varied significantly in different geographic regions and that differences in the previous administrative background of superordinates also affected their perceptions. However, neither the age of superordinates nor the number of years they had been in their present position significantly affected perceptions. A valid comparison of responses for male and female superordinates was not possible, because only 5 of the 216 respondents were female. (JG)

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Immediate Superordinates' Perception of the Middle School Principal's Functions

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EA 008 681

Upon completion of an analysis of more than 100 studies on the principal and principalship reported since 1965, the researchers found inconclusive information as to the expected functions of the principal, and specifically, the expected functions of the middle school principal. With the exception of writers Bobroff, Howard, and Howard, no other writers have addressed themselves specifically to the middle school principal. They clearly showed that a majority of the principals of middle schools have not undergone any professional preparation explicitly designed for administrators at the middle school level. The review further indicated that most middle school principals had never taught middle school students, and very few had ever taken course work relating specifically to the adolescent.

Purpose, Objectives, and Limitations of the Study

It was the purpose of the study to analyze what the middle school principal's immediate superordinate felt the principal's functions should be.

Specifically, the objectives were:

1. To determine if school size affects the perceived middle school principal's functions in curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel guidance, school-community relations, administrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement.
2. To determine if geographical location affects the perceived middle school principal's functions in curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel guidance, school-community

relations, administratrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement.

3. To determine if the sex of the immediate superordinate affects the perceived middle school principal's function in curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel guidance, school-community relations, administrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement.
4. To determine if the age of the immediate superordinate affects the perceived middle school principal's functions in curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel guidance, school-community relations, administrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement.
5. To determine if years of experience as immediate superordinate affects the perceived middle school principal's functions in curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel guidance, school-community relations, administrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement.
6. To determine if level of principalship experience or no experience affects the perceived middle school principal's functions in curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel guidance, school-community relations, administrative responsibility, evaluation responsibility, and professional improvement.

The least squares analysis of variance technique was utilized in this design with the hypotheses being tested at the .10 level of significance. The method of least squares will yield unbiased minimum-variance estimators when applied to estimation problems.[59] In addition, this procedure compensates for unequal cell frequencies. In order to determine the distribution of the variables a frequency distribution table was used.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested using the least squares analysis of variance technique:

1. No significant differences existed according to school size and the six major categories of the middle school principal's functions as perceived by the immediate superordinate.
2. No significant differences existed according to geographical location in the six major categories of the middle school principal's functions as perceived by the immediate superordinate.
3. No significant differences existed between male and female immediate superordinates in their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories.
4. No significant differences existed according to age of immediate superordinates in their perception of the middle school principals' functions in the six major categories.

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[59] B. J. Winer, Statistical Principles in Experimental Design (San Francisco, Calif.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962), p. 63.

5. No significant differences existed according to years of experience in the immediate superordinate position and their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories.
6. No significant differences existed in the middle superordinates' level of principalship experience; elementary school, middle school, junior high, high school, or no principalship experience, and their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories.

The data used in the study was collected from a sample of immediate superordinates in United States public school districts with middle schools, regardless of grade organization. Specific findings are limited to the selected population represented by this sample.

This study is also restricted by the nature of the forced-choice survey instrument. Individual subjects may not have been able to define the middle school principal's functions in the exact manner in which they preferred.

RESULTS

To accomplish the objectives of the study a 124-item questionnaire was developed and sent to 250 superordinates throughout the United States. The instrument included a seven-point Likert-type rating scale which enabled the superordinate to rate according to the degree of importance he placed on each item of the middle school principal's functions. From the results of the data obtained by the questionnaire, the researchers tested the following specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis Number 1

The hypothesis that no significant differences existed according to school size and the six major categories of the middle school principal's functions as perceived by the immediate superordinate was tested by computing an analysis of variance for the six categories and the three groups of school size, (Small 1-500; Medium 501-700; Large 701+). The F-ratio was computed for the six categories and groups of school size. A Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was performed for the factors that showed a significant F in the analysis of variance test.

The LSD test was calculated for the school-community relations factor. The size of school was shown to affect the perceived functions of the middle school principal in school-community relations. The findings indicate that superordinates who direct middle school principals of small schools place less importance on school-community relations in their perception of his functions, while the superordinates of medium and large school principals place significantly more importance on school-community relations.

Hypothesis Number 2

The hypothesis that no significant differences existed according to geographical location in the six major categories of the middle school principal's functions as perceived by the immediate superordinate was tested the same way as hypothesis 1.

The findings indicate that geographical location has significance in the superordinates' perception of the middle school principal's

functions. The superordinates from the Middle States Association were significantly different from superordinates in the New England Association and Southern Association in their perception of the principal's functions in personnel guidance. The New England Association and Southern Association superordinates felt more emphasis should be placed on personnel guidance than those from the Middle States Association.

It is apparent from the analyzed data that superordinates in the Northwestern/Western Associations perceive administrative responsibility as being a less significant function of the principal than their counterparts from the New England Association and Southern Association. The North Central and Middle States Associations were not significantly different from the New England Association, Southern, and Northwestern/Western Associations in their perceptions of administrative responsibility.

The findings revealed that the superordinates from the New England Association and Southern Association place significantly more importance on the evaluation responsibility of the principal than the superordinates in the Northwestern/Western and Middle States Associations. This also shows that the perceptions of the superordinates from the North Central Association were not significantly different from the other associations.

Further analysis reveals that the N.E.A. and Southern Association superordinates felt more importance should be on professional improvement of the principal than the superordinates in the Northwestern/Western Associations.

Hypothesis Number 3

The hypothesis that no significant differences existed between male and female immediate superordinates in their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories was not calculated because only five of the 216 respondents were female. With such a small number of analysis would not give an accurate measure of variance.

Hypothesis Number 4

The hypothesis that no significant differences existed according to age of immediate superordinates in their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories was tested by computing an analysis of variance for the six categories and three age groups: 22-40; 41-49; 50+. The analysis of variance did not show a significant F.

Hypothesis Number 5

The hypothesis that no significant differences existed according to years of experience in the immediate superordinate position and their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories was tested by computing an analysis of variance for the six categories and the four groups for years of experience: 1-2; 3-4; 5-14; 15+. The analysis of variance did not show a significant F.

Hypothesis Number 6

The hypothesis that no significant differences existed in the immediate superordinates' level of principalship; elementary school, middle school, junior high school, high school, or no principalship experience and their perception of the middle school principal's functions in the six major categories was tested by computing an analysis of variance for the six categories and levels of principalship experience. Further analysis was done as in hypothesis 1 when significant difference was found.

The findings indicate that superordinates with elementary principalship experience felt that middle school principals should place more importance on school-community relations than superordinates with other levels of principalship experience. The results also indicate that superordinates without principalship experience perceive the administrative responsibility factor of less importance than those that have principalship experience at any level.

Further analysis reveals that superordinates with high school experience in their perceptions place more emphasis on the evaluation and professional improvement categories than superordinates with other principalship experience.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The conclusions in this section are based on data obtained through the use of the Questionnaire of Middle School Principal's Functions, which was analyzed to determine immediate superordinates' perceptions of the middle school principal's functions. The least squares analysis of variance technique and Fisher's LSD test were utilized to analyze the data.

In this study the findings have implications for all groups who would benefit from improved school administration and supervision. The implications are more specifically directed to the following: (1) the middle school principal, (2) the immediate superordinates who direct middle school principals, (3) the superintendent and his staff, (4) school board members and community, (5) administrator-preparing institutions of higher learning, (6) professional organizations, and (7) research personnel.

The 124-item questionnaire could be used by superintendents, immediate superordinates, teachers and other school personnel as an instrument to evaluate principals at all levels. It could also be used as a self-evaluation instrument for principals, and could benefit administrator-preparing institutions in their programs to better prepare administrators for the public schools.

An examination of the data concerning the superordinates' level of principalship experience revealed several facts of interest to school districts. In the selection of superordinates who direct principals, the following information should be useful.

It is apparent that administrators with elementary experience place more importance on school-community relations, while administrators with high school experience place more importance on the evlauation and professional improvement categories. On the other hand, those with principalship experience place more importance on the administrative responsibility factor than those with no principalship experience.

It is not surprising that superordinates with elementary experience place more importance on school-community relations than those with secondary experience. It often appears that more parents are

involved in the school program at the elementary level, such as P.T.A., home visitations, and parent conferences, than at the secondary level.

Superordinates with secondary experience, on the other hand, placed more importance on the evaluation responsibility factor. It would appear that principals at the secondary level have greater evaluation responsibilities, since they are accountable for more staff members, for providing a more diversified curriculum, and for insuring maintenance of more facilities than at the elementary level.

The fact that superordinates with secondary experience rated the professional improvement factor more important than superordinates with elementary experience is of interest. Principals at the secondary level are facing an increasing demand for rapid change in the instructional program. With the many innovations in curriculum in recent years, secondary principals perhaps feel an urgent need to keep informed of current trends and new approaches to education. Also with the pressures that are sometimes placed on administrators by the community, he might feel a need to improve himself professionally so that he can better serve the community.

Superordinates with principalship experience perceived the administrative responsibility factor to be more important than those without principalship experience. This might seem to indicate that those not having principalship experience feel an inadequacy in this area.

The data reveals that a principal moving from one geographical location to another may find role expectations to be considerably different. For example, superordinates in the New England Association feel more emphasis should be placed on personnel guidance than those in the Middle States Association, while the North Central Association super-

ordinates perceive the principal's functions to be the same as the other associations. Also the data revealed that superordinates perceive principals of medium and large schools place more importance on school-community relations than administrators of small schools.

This information adds strength to other studies that show the principal's role expectations are uncertain and ambiguous. There appears to be little similarity in the principal's role expectations as he moves from one location to another, or merely from a small school to a large school within the same location.

The section on the sex of superordinates is of particular interest. Only two percent of the respondents were female. Although women have been in principalship positions for a number of years, this does not appear to be the case in administrative positions above that of the principalship.

This may be due to the fact that generally, in the past, school boards have turned to a qualified male in making their selection to fill a superordinates' position. The feminist movement and governmental legislation may bring about some change in this area.

On the other hand, a recent study by Miskel[60] shows consistent differences in work motivation between males and females, which may help explain why males dominate in the number of administrative positions held.

It is apparent that neither the superordinates' ages nor their years of experience had any bearing on their perceptions of the middle school principal's functions. This seems to indicate that the young

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[60]Cecil Miskel, "The Motivation of Educators to Work," Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 1, (Winter, 1972), pp. 42-53.

and/or inexperienced superordinates were well-prepared for the position, and also that those considerably older and having more experience have not lost sight of the principal's over-all functions.

A majority (92 percent) of all responding superordinates reported that they had some principalship experience, with half (50 percent) having junior high experience, and a total of 34 percent having middle school principalship experience. The finding shows that school districts have been emphasizing experience in making their selection for the superordinate's position. With evaluation of principals as a part of the superordinate's responsibilities, it would be beneficial to have had principalship experience.

It should be noted that 81 percent of the 216 responding to the study requested a copy of the results. This indicates that a large percentage of the superordinates are interested in the overall findings. This interest could be due to several reasons. One reason may be that superordinates are interested in how their colleagues view the principal's functions. Another may be that they have a genuine interest in producing some form of written guidelines for determining the functions of the principal.

This study is only a part of a large overall research project on the principalship under the leadership of Dr. Alfred P. Wilson, Kansas State University.